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Swedish Spy Details Soviet ICBM Gamble

By George C. Wilson

Washington—Soviet leaders in 1950 concluded they could not match the United States in strategic aircraft and therefore gambled that they could develop an ICBM by the 1960s which would restore the power balance, according to the former Swedish air attache to the U.S. who was spying for Russia at the time.

Col. Stig Eric Constans Wennerstroem, now 57, was convicted in Sweden of gross espionage and sentenced to life imprisonment last June 12. A censored version of the answers he gave to the Swedish Federal Policy Agency recently was released by the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee "for the information of senators."

Wennerstroem said the Russian decision made the 1950s a period "of great nervousness" for the Soviets. They had to ignore most other weaponry while they channeled their resources into the rocket's development. He said the Russians tried to fill the gaps through espionage, with technical information from the U.S. the top priority objective.

Wennerstroem during his trial said he obtained much of this information for the Soviets from aerospace contractors and military acquaintances (see box) while serving in Washington as Swedish air attache from April, 1952, to May, 1957. He said he used all kinds of cloak-and-dagger methods while spying here, including: passing rolls of film to his Russian contact during innocent looking handshakes at embassy parties; winning the friendship of well-connected American women whom he found more influential than their Swedish counterparts, and using medicine cabinets in his contact's home as a drop for documents and films. He and his contact had keys to the cabinets.

The 166-page translation released by the Senate traces the evolution of Russian military strategy as seen by Wennerstroem, who confessed to being a top spy for the Soviets as well as supplying information occasionally to U.S. agents.

In four crucial meetings in 1949 and 1950, Soviet military and political leaders made the momentous decision to go all out to develop an ICBM, Wennerstroem said, for the following reasons:

• **U.S. air strategy.** Wennerstroem said he himself had seen and reported to the Soviets the voluminous study the USAF conducted on the effectiveness of its bombing of Germany. He said this study resulted in three basic conclusions: (1) "It was not possible to obtain any practical results against the Soviet Union from attacks of the great fleets of planes and bombers such as had been used in World War 2;" (2) ". . . It would be possible to achieve the desired results with very few planes in each attack if nuclear weapons were used;" (3) American intelligence during World War 2 had not supplied adequate information about German targets, and "the intelligence information that was available on the Soviet Union was even less satisfactory than what had been available on Germany. The conduct of an air war against the Soviet Union required, therefore, not only the use of nuclear weapons, but also the organization during peacetime of a particularly effective intelligence service."

Wennerstroem said this bombing study prompted an intensive U.S. effort to obtain the location of targets in Russia, such as factories and air fields. One of his jobs while still working part time for the Americans was to report whether homes in one section of the Ukraine had thatch or metal roofs. He said this was vital information for pilots trying to navigate at night on the basis of the radar image on their cockpit scopes.

Wennerstroem told the Americans the roofs were metal, and then relayed the American interest to his Soviet superiors. The Soviets plotted the metal roofs in their territory, hoping to deduce the courses American bombers would take in the event of an attack. "Little by little," he said, "it became apparent that the object of the whole thing [of finding out about metal roofs] was to employ biological war materials against the harvests in the Ukraine and in Kuban, which are the Soviet Union's breadbasket. To do so effectively, courses had to be set for the aircraft, for which purpose these points were needed over the flat plains, since it is difficult to navigate without them."

American intelligence officials also got some target information from contacts within the Soviet Union, he said. In order to supplement the radio communication between these agents within [redacted] and allies in border-

Attache Job Eased Spy's Data Gathering

Washington—Col. Stig Eric Constans Wennerstroem, former Swedish air attache to the U.S., convicted of spying for Russia, said that during his tour in Washington he gathered invaluable technical information from aerospace contractors by posing as a potential buyer of their equipment.

The Senate Internal Security subcommittee's 166-page transcript of his testimony (see story) does not contain the names of contractors which supplied information, but Wennerstroem's testimony does describe his method of operation. The Swedish government and the subcommittee both made deletions in the transcript. Rune Beckman, chief of Swedish interrogation, said Wennerstroem's primary Soviet spying assignment while serving as Swedish air attache in Washington from April, 1952, to May, 1957, was to get the latest technical information on U.S. aircraft, rockets, robots, bombsights, radar, cameras and electronics.

Wennerstroem said his first espionage contact in Washington was Maj. Gen. Viktor Kuvinov, Soviet air attache until Oct. 20, 1954. Later contacts here were Lt. Col. Boris F. Bogatyrev and Maj. Alexsei F. Antonov, Soviet assistant air attaches during Wennerstroem's tour here.

One way of exchanging information, Wennerstroem said, was to tell the contact man on which numbered coat hook in the Russian embassy his topcoat was hanging. The Russian contact man then would go downstairs and remove the film or documents from the indicated pocket—usually the topcoat's inner pocket. On the street, Wennerstroem said his left hand in the pocket of the topcoat signaled danger and warned the contact man not to express any recognition.

Since the Swedish government did buy equipment for its military forces, Wennerstroem said he had little trouble obtaining technical information from contractors and military officials about U.S. weapons. He said the Soviet intelligence service was interested mainly in his obtaining non-restricted information readily available to U.S. allies and neutrals, but not to Russians. The Soviets "wanted above all to have merely the designs, drawings, coupling schemes, etc., to facilitate the work of their designers," Wennerstroem said.

As an accredited air attache, Wennerstroem had special access to some military information. He said his official permit as an air attache was especially helpful in trying to obtain information from personnel at a military base. He said military subordinates often did not check his credentials because he had been introduced to them by their chief. This enabled him to see some secret materia

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